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REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

This is Applicant's response to the Office action of March 1, 2004 in which claims 1-2 and 5-7 were rejected, and claims 3-4 and 8 were objected to.

Claims 1 and 2 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rusch (US Patent No. 5,148,986) in view of Daiket et al (GB 2,111,420). However, the Examiner also indicated that claims 3, 4 and 8 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have amended claim 1 to include the limitations of claim 3 and have canceled claim 3. The amendment is believed to place claims 1-2 and 4-6 in condition for allowance.

Claim 5 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rusch (US Patent No. 5,148,986) and Daiket et al as applied to claims 1 and 2 and further in view of Trapani et al (US Patent No. 5,014,916). Claim 5 depends from claim 1, which as amended is believed to be patentable, and therefore claim 5 is also patentable on the same basis.

With respect to the remaining Claims 7-8, Claims 6 and 7 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rusch and Daiket et al as applied to Claims 1 and 2, and further in view of Van Kuiken et al (US Patent No. 5,626,674) or Pank et al (US Patent No. 5,820,938). The Examiner has taken the position that Rusch and Daiker et al. disclose the invention substantially as claimed. However, Rusch and Daiket et al. do not disclose that the tubes are rotatable. The Examiner maintains that Van Kuiken et al. and Tanke et al. disclose tubes that are rotatable in the same field of endeavor. With respect to Claim 6, simply because a reference is in the same field of endeavor does not establish sufficient motivation to combine references. Notwithstanding the same, again Applicants have amended Claim 1 in a manner which is believed to make Claim 6 allowable.

With respect to Claim 7, the rejection ignores claim limitations. Claim 7 recites: "wherein a portion of said air cap extends over said outer tube in radially outwardly spaced relationship thereto to define an annular cylindrical air gap between said inner surface of said air cap and said cylindrical outer surface of said outer tube, said air gap coupled to a source of high velocity air for developing a column of air within said air gap which travels along said air cap toward said discharge opening and *provides a boundary of air flowing along said inner*

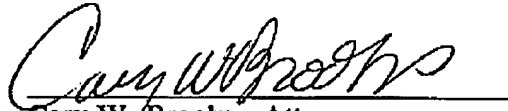
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surface of said air cap to protect said inner surface from exposure to the heat of the combustion chamber flame and molten metal feed wire material" (emphasis added). The rejection simply fails to address the claim language, ignoring the same. None of the references suggest such a structure. No prima facie case of obviousness has been established with respect to Claims 7-8. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request notice of allowance of Claims 7 and 8.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request notice of allowance of Claims 1-2 and 4-8 remaining on the case.

Respectfully submitted,



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